Margaret Fuller
Outdoor Books & Slide Shows

P.O. Box 148
Weiser, Idaho 83672

MAR 0 6 2000

March 1, 2000

To: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Walla Walla District
Attn: Lower Snake River Study
201 N. Third Ave.
Walla Walla, WA 99362

Dear Sirs:

In 1970, before the last of the dams on the Lower Snake River, my children and I could go to Dagger Falls on the Middle Fork of the Salmon River in Idaho and see dozens of three-foot salmon leaping up the rivers. We could drive along the main Salmon River above Stanley and see several salmon spawning at the edge of the river. There was a thriving business in selling ice for the fish that were caught. My children are grown now and have their own children, but there are no salmon to show my grandchildren at Dagger Falls or near Stanley except at the fish hatchery.

The Sockeye and Chinook salmon of the Northwest have fallen to levels near extinction. The only way to have a chance of saving them is to breach the four dams on the lower Snake River. It may already be too late, but at least it is worth a try. Over 200 scientists who have studied the problem have agreed that is the surest way to save the salmon.

The most recent NIFMS study concluded that removing the dams would let the salmon runs recover at least 75% of their numbers, but when published these results were hidden in a bunch of questions about habitat and commercial fishing because NIFMS itself is in charge of commercial fishing in the U.S. and has the interest of keeping it profitable. It was a case of the fox guarding the henhouse.

Dam removal works. In places such as the Butte River in California where dams have been removed, salmon runs have recovered.

.The complaints of the wheat farmers that not having barges on the river will increase shipping costs enough to put them out of business are untrue. Otherwise farmers out of range of the river barges wouldn't raise any wheat in Idaho, and they do raise it. The farmers near the lower Snake raised wheat profitably before the barges could come up the river. The increase in outfitted salmon and steelhead fishing caused by the return of the salmon to near-normal levels would more than make up for any economic loss caused by breaching the dams.

Margaret Fuller
Outdoor Books & Slide Shows

P.O. Box 148
Weiser, Idaho 83672

The dams provide no flood control because they have to be kept almost full for navigation. They provide only 5% of the region's hydro power. Hatchery fish are too weak to make the long swims to the ocean as juveniles and back as adults. An effort to replace sockeye in Idaho's Redfish Lake with Canadian sockeye failed to produce a single fish that returned to the lake. Only twenty sockeye have made it back upstream in the last ten years anywhere in the region affected by the four dams. Only one or two fish have made it to Redfish Lake.

By the treaty of 1855 with the northwest tribes of Indians they are assured of hunting and fishing rights in the "usual and accustomed places". The salmon are sacred to these Indians, so as well as taking some of their livelihood the Federal Government took part of their religion when the dams were built.

If the dams are not removed, it is likely that Idaho will have to provide extra water to attempt to flush salmon smolts to the ocean, and that will take away badly needed irrigation water. Drying up thousands of acres of farmed land will create an economic loss to agriculture much larger than any possible loss from dam removal.

All habitat in the former spawning areas must be checked and activities that degrade the spawning areas such as logging, grazing, and home building must either be stopped or modified to prevent any effect on the rivers. Without breaching the dams, this will do no good.

Please consider this letter my formal comment on the All-H paper and the Lower Snake River Juvenile salmon EIS.

Sincerely,

Margaret Fuller

Margaret Fuller